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ABSTRACT

This study compared scores on the Indiana Statewide Test for Educational Progress (ISTEP) for students who received implementation of the Shurley Method program with those of students who did not receive the program. The Shurley method, developed by B. Shurley, is a language skills teaching method aimed at students of all learning styles that helps students merge a strong skill foundation with the writing process. Ex post facto research was used to compare data from the comparison year to the treatment year. Data collected were the individual student ISTEP results in language, language mechanics, and the ISTEP language composite components for 39 third graders and 37 sixth graders. It is concluded that the inclusion of the Shurley Method did not increase student performance in these three areas. Scores of students who studied by the Shurley Method were significantly lower in two of the three subtests. (Author/SLD)

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Implementing the Shurley Method at Reelsville Elementary School to Raise Achievement Scores: Effective or Ineffective?

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Angela Nicole Harris and David A. Gilman

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Abstract

This study compared ISTEP scores of students who received implementation of The Shurley Method program to ISTEP scores of students who did not receive the program. Ex post facto research was used to compare data from the comparison year to the treatment year. Data collected was the individual results of the student ISTEP scores in language, language mechanics and the language composite components of the ISTEP. It was concluded that the implementation of The Shurley Method did not increase student performance within the three component areas of the ISTEP. Moreover, the scores of students who studied by the Shurley Method were significantly lower in two of the three subtests.

Background of the Problem

Indiana school corporations are feeling the effects of the recent approval of Public Law 221. According to a recent release by the Department of Education, the Accountability system that has been developed as a component of Public Law 221 will hold schools responsible for educating Indiana students based on high standards and will challenge them to continuously improve achievement. The primary indicators of school improvement and performance in elementary schools will be the ISTEP. As a result of the mandates passed by Public Law 221, schools feel a since of ergency to raise achievement scores. Many schools are implementing new innovative methods that claim to help students learn skills better. Are school systems using programs that claim promising results before examining the research on such methods?

One such method that schools are implementing throughout Indiana is The Shurley Method. The Shurley Method is a program developed by Brenda Shurley. After teaching eighth grade English for one year she "felt very frustrated because her students did not retain and understand the material as well as they should after a whole year's work." She knew there had to be a better way to teach language skills to students but she was unable to find one. As a result, in 1971, she decided to develop her own. Over several years she perfected and expanded the Shurley Method which was a complete language program. Shurley states that her method was the end result of twenty-five years of research. Actual classroom situations and the learning needs of students were used to develop her exciting English program. When teachers use this program, "their students' grammar and writing skills are used automatically with dependable results" (Shurley 2000). Shurley also found the greatest impact was the student' heightened self-confidence and self-esteem. Shurley's findings were confirmed by Duncan (2000), Raines

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(2000), and Wetsell (2000) who concluded that implementing the Shurley Method caused students to gain confidence and raised students' self-esteem.

According to Brenda Shurley (2000), there are eight reasons why educators should use The Shurley Method:

- The Shurley Method is the end result of twenty-five years of research. Actual classroom situations and the learning needs of students have been used to develop this exciting English program.
- The Shurley Method never teaches isolated concepts. A concrete set of questions about each word in a sentence is used to teach students how all the parts of a sentence fit together. Students always have a clear picture of how to write complete sentences.
- It uses all learning styles. Students are constantly exposed to "see it, hear it, say it, do it" activities that meet the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles of students.
- The Shurley Method successfully teaches language skills to students with different learning abilities and to students who learn English as a second language.
- The Shurley Method uses repetition, fun, and student-teacher interaction to help students learn difficult English skills. The teacher models each new step in the Shurley Method for the students. Then, the students actively participate with the teacher as the steps are practiced.
- The method provides enough repetition to master each concept taught. Lessons include daily practice of old skills while new skills are being added.
- The students are taught how to merge a strong skill foundation with the writing process. As a result, teachers can spend less time going over beginning grammar and editing skills and more time introducing and enhancing advanced grammar and writing skills.

- Students' grammar and writing skills are used automatically with dependable results. This leads to higher level thinking skills because the students are stimulated to learn and use their own thought processes to solve difficult language problems.

While additional research is needed that examines the results of The Shurley Method and the factors that contribute to student and teacher success, these findings are encouraging. The study of the implementation of The Shurley Method at Reelsville Elementary School was an initial attempt to examine and assess the effectiveness of this method. For this study, students' ISTEP scores in language, language mechanics, and language composition measured the program's effectiveness. If it is found that the implementation of this method raises achievement scores, then Reesville would be wise to continue implementing this program throughout all grade levels.

Statement of the Problem

Are the latest educational programs being implemented in schools today really helping students increase achievement? Are schools "jumping on the band wagon" and implementing programs that have not been proven to effectively produce the results as promised?

Does the implementation of The Shurley Method increase scores for third and sixth grade students in the language, language mechanics, and language component portions of the ISTEP?

For the purpose of this study, two directional and two null hypotheses were tested:

1. The scores of the third grade students at Reelsville Elementary will increase in the language, language mechanics, and language composite components of the ISTEP as a result of the implementation of The Shurley Method

2. The scores of the sixth grade students at Reelsville Elementary will increase in the language, language mechanics, and language composite components of the ISTEP as a result of the implementation of The Shurley Method.

3. There is no significant difference in the achievement of third and sixth grade students.

4. There is no significant interaction between grade and treatment.

Methodology

The sample for this study consisted of the third and sixth grade students from Reeslville Elementary School during the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years. During the 2000-2001 school year there were 39 third grade students and 37 sixth grade students; in 2001-2002 there were 42 third grade students and 44 sixth grade students. Reelsville is a rural elementary school of average size with a total population of approximately 320 students. The socioeconomic status of students ranges from low to middle class; the population tends to be similar to other rural schools in Central Indiana.

Students in 2000-2001 are the comparison group. Beginning in the 2001-2002 school year The Shurley Method program was implemented school wide. The purpose of implementation of The Shurley Method was to increase student performance on the ISTEP. Therefore, students from the 2001-2002 school year are the experimental group.

This study used a pre-treatment, post-treatment approach. It compares data from before the implementation of The Shurley Method to data collected after one year of implementation. Ex post facto research was conducted to collect and test data.

Results were tested for significance at the .05 level by means of a two way (2x2) analysis of variance. Results are to be reported at the actual level of significance.

Results

Table 1
Means of Groups

	Language		Language Mechanics		Language Composite	
Groups	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
3 – Control	62.46	18.25	55.51	13.92	61.46	18.38
3 – Shurley	56.00	20.94	53.98	16.25	55.36	18.78
6 – Control	61.43	15.90	62.76	17.72	62.43	17.02
6 – Shurley	57.16	17.74	50.84	15.86	54.20	15.31

Table I shows the means and standard deviations of the treatment groups. It is evident that there was an unanticipated result in that the mean of students who studied by The Shurley Method were lower than those who studied by the traditional method.

To analyze the data a two-way analysis of variance was conducted. When group comparisons were made, language mechanics had one degree of freedom, which made $F = 7.151$ significant at the .008. In language composite there was one degree of freedom, and $F = 6.843$, which was significant at the .010 level. When comparing the interaction between all groups and grades, language mechanics there was one degree of freedom and $F = 4.257$. That result was significant at the .041 level.

Table 2
Statistical Tests of Hypothesis

Test	df	F	Sig.
Group			
Language	1	3.445	.065
Mechanics	1	7.151	.008
Composite	1	6.843	.010
Grades			
Language	1	.001	.982
Mechanics	1	.667	.415
Composite	1	.001	.974
Group*Grades			
Language	1	.143	.706
Mechanics	1	4.257	.041
Composite	1	.150	.699

Table 2 also shows that in language the control group was almost better than the Shurley group which tested at the .065 level of significance. The control group in language mechanics performed much better then the Shurley group which tested at the .008 level of significance. The control group in language composite performed much better then the Shurley group which tested at the .010 level of significance.

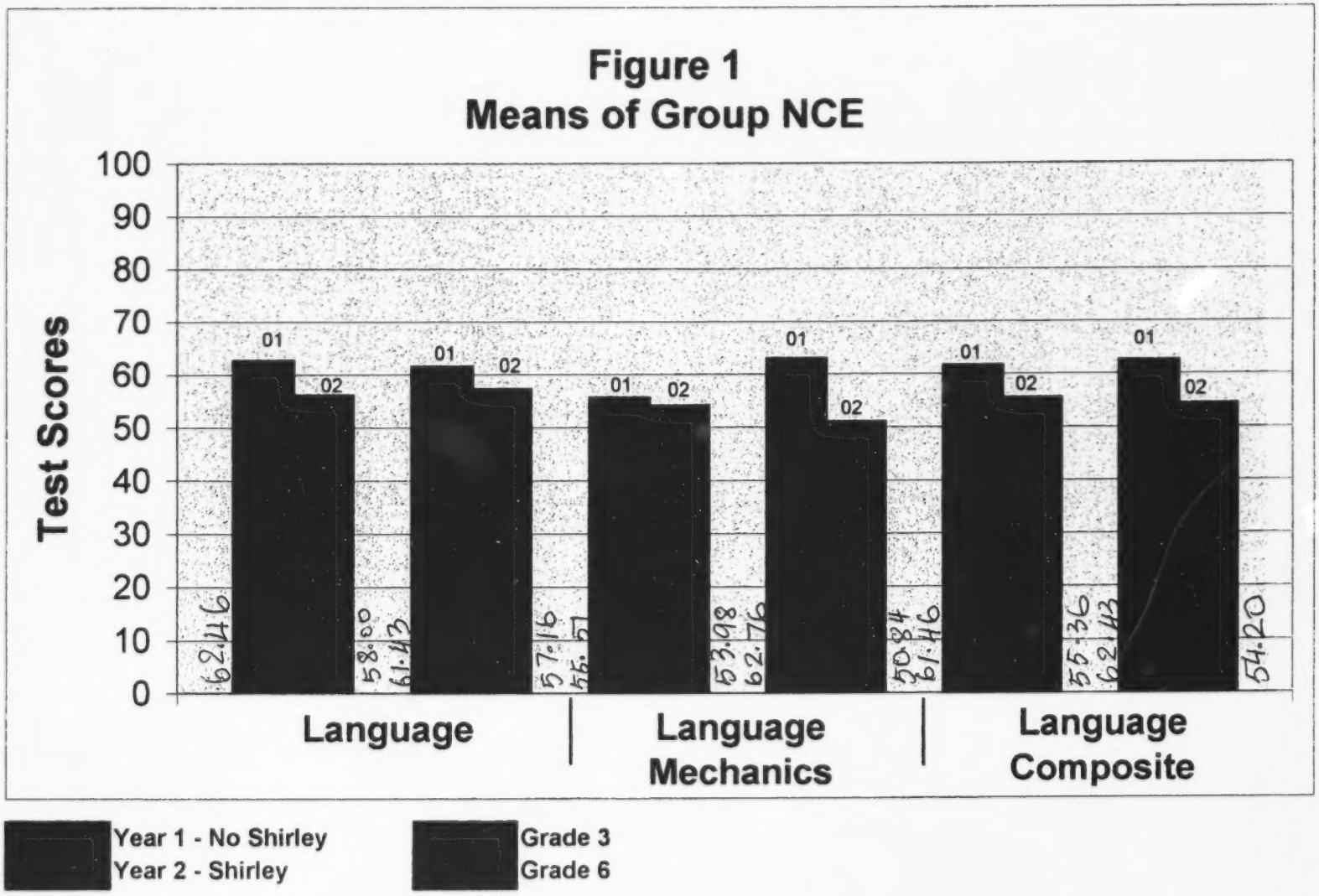
Table 2 also shows that there was no significant difference between the third grade and the sixth grade.

The sixth grade control group scored better than the third grade classes who received Shurley. There was one degree of freedom which made f=4.257 at the .041 level of significance.

Table 2 also shows that there was no interaction between group and grade in Lanuage and Composite subtest; however there was significant interaction (F=4.257;p=.041) between group

and grade on the mechanics subtest. The difference was much higher in the sixth grade than in the third.

Figure 1 shows the comparison of 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 means of the normal curve equivalent scores on ISTEP for third and sixth grade students in language, language mechanics and language composite. In every instance, the control groups scored higher than the experimental groups.



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Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

For the purposes of this study the success of the implementation of The Shurley Method was measured by comparing third and sixth grade student scores in language, language mechanics, and language composite components of the ISTEP from the year prior to the implementation to the first year of implementation. From the results of the two-way analysis of variance the mean scores decreased after the implementation of The Shurley Method in all three components of the ISTEP. The first directional hypothesis, which was the scores of the third grade students at Reelsville Elementary will increase in the language, language mechanics, and language composite components of the ISTEP as a result of the implementation of The Shurley Method must be rejected. The second directional hypothesis, which was the scores of the sixth grade students at Reelsville Elementary will increase in the language, language mechanics, and language composite components of the ISTEP as a result of the implementation of The Shurley Method, must also be rejected.

In response to the concern apparent from the Junior High teachers, Reelsville Elementary School implemented The Shurley Method last year. Our school corporation has three elementary schools, which filter into the Junior High. The Shurley Method is being implemented at the Junior High. The Junior High school teachers reported that as seventh graders, the students who weren't receiving The Shurley Method were significantly behind in skills then the student's who were receiving instruction by this program. How is this possible when the results of this study show it is detrimental to student achievement? Is it possible that ISTEP does not measure the curriculum that The Shurley Method is trying to teach?

The results came as a surprise due to the reviews which supported The Shurley Method as a complete English program. The following could perhaps account for the results:

1. The Shurley Method was new in 2001-2002; teachers implemented it as a trial and error method until they achieved personal satisfaction.
2. All teachers were not given the proper training in The Shurley Method.
3. Some teachers may not have implemented The Shurley Method in its entirety.

Perhaps future research will be conducted after The Shurley Method has been implemented for a longer period of time. Researchers may also want to focus on effects The Shurley Method is having on achievement tests. In all three areas of the ISTEP, each class who did not receive instruction in The Shurley Method scored higher then the classes who did receive the instruction.

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Appendix

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